

Today's Topic: Who Slew the Dreamer?

Questions former Memphian was asked

The text of the questions asked of Frank Holt during his polygraph examination, and his responses:

Polygraph examiner: Regarding whether or not you were paid by Loyd Jowers to shoot Dr. King, do you intend to answer all of my questions truthfully?

Holt: Yes.

In 1968 were you paid \$10,000 to shoot Dr. Martin Luther King?

Holt: No.

Have you ever been questioned by the authorities about the shooting of Dr. King?

Holt: No.

Did Loyd Jowers hire you to shoot Dr. Martin Luther King?

Holt: No.

Did you shoot Dr. Martin Luther King?

Holt: No.

In 1968 were you involved in any plot or conspiracy to kill Dr. Martin Luther King?

Holt: No.

Were you inside Jim's Grill when Dr. King was shot?

Holt: Yes.

Did you see anybody shoot Dr. King?

Holt: No.

Do you know for sure who shot Dr. King?

Holt: No.

Test indicates no involvement

Ex-Memphian passes lie detector exam

By KIRK LOGGINS
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Staff Writers

A Nashville polygraph examiner said yesterday former Memphis resident Frank Holt is truthful when he says he had nothing to do with the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

Charles R. Scott, a private investigator and polygraph examiner, strapped Holt into a polygraph chair yesterday and interviewed him for a half hour before asking him eight questions about King's assassination — and about former Memphis businessman Loyd Jowers' claim that he hired Holt to shoot the civil rights leader.

Holt, 62, now a Florida day laborer, denied that he shot King, had any involvement in a plot to shoot King or knows who shot King.

"He showed no stress on the test, and in my opinion he was being truthful about the whole incident," Scott said. "In my opinion, he doesn't know anything other than what he's heard or read."

Scott, who has been a state-licensed polygraph examiner since 1979, said Holt's answers "failed to



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CHARLES R. SCOTT
Licensed polygraph examiner

show any deception." He said polygraph judgments are based on test subjects' breath, heart rate and nervous system responses.

Scott began conducting polygraph tests while he worked as an investigator for the Metro public defender's office in 1979-82. He has been a private investigator and polygraph examiner since 1988.

Polygraph tests are not considered evidence in Tennessee courts, but local officials say they are valid, useful tools for finding the truth in many instances.

Polygraph tests, known as lie detector tests, were invented around 1925.

A strap is attached around the subject's chest to register their breathing; another strap circles their upper arm to record blood pressure; and a third is taped to the hand to register "skin resistance,"

more commonly known as sweaty palms. The straps are attached to a diagnostic recording device that records ink lines on paper.

The lines measure a person's physical reactions when asked questions. To see if a person is faking or on drugs, the examiner asks a set of control questions, such as "Are you wearing shoes?" or "Do you drink coffee?"

The key to their validity: the credibility and skill of the test administrator.

"It is all in the administration of the test," said Cecil Branstetter, a prominent local attorney. "I've had some cases that I thought it good that my client go ahead and take that test, as a means for the government to lay off him, to show that he is innocent."

Can a person beat the test? Branstetter says it is possible but not likely if the test administrator is

qualified.

Mental impairment, lack of sleep or drug use might affect the test.

But, Branstetter said, "very few people can beat it. If a person is totally amoral and has no conscience whatsoever, they might could fool it."

Scott said he considered Holt competent to take a polygraph test, despite other people's description of Holt as mentally "slow."

"He understands right and wrong. He has a very detailed memory of that period. I feel he understands what's going on."

Scott said a valid polygraph exam can be run on a person of low intelligence if it deals with major events in his or her life:

"I asked him how he felt about the King shooting. He said he was grieved by it, like any other black person."

"That old man couldn't beat a polygraph if he'd killed somebody."

"I don't think he could run a chart that consistent if he had killed King — or if he had killed anybody."

Scott told Holt, as he released the straps on the polygraph machine:

"Mr. Holt, I think you had nothing to do with it [the King assassination]."

"I know I didn't," Holt replied. "When you start lying, you're going to have trouble." ■